DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 805 JC 890 374

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TITLE Longitudinal Study of Performance of Students Entering Harper College, 1976-1986. Volume XVII, Number 1.
INSTITUTION William Rainey Harper Coll., Palatine, Ill. Office of Planning and Research.
PUB DATE 25 Jul 88
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Academic Persistence; College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; Degrees (Academic); Full Time Students; Grade Point Average; Grading; Longitudinal Studies; Part Time Students; *Student Characteristics; Tables (Data); Trend Analysis; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study was conducted at William Rainey Harper College (WRHC), in Illinois, to observe the performance and achievement of students entering the college each fall from 1967 through 1986. Academic and personal data from transcripts were analyzed for randomly selected samples of 200 full- and 200 part-time students from each fall's entering class. Study findings included the following: (1) grade point averages (GPAs) were greatly affected by the implementation of a policy allowing faculty to give a grade of "N" rather than "F" to students who did not attend; the policy caused GPAs to rise from 2.38 to 2.62 for full-time students and from 2.24 to 2.74 for part-time students; (2) full-time students entering WRHC after the age of 21 had GPAs 0.38 points higher than their younger counterparts, while part-time students over 35 achieved GPAs 0.98 points higher than part-time students under 21; (3) the average GPA of female students was 2.62, compared to 2.36 for males; (4) persistence rates remained fairly constant over the years, with approximately 65% of the students who started WRHC full time returning the next fall; (5) part-time students attended WRHC for an average of 3.5 semesters and earned an average of 18 credit hours, while full-time students averaged 4.8 semesters and earned an average of 45 credit hours; (6) older students were more likely than younger students to drop out before graduation; and (7) while 35% to 40% of the students attended another school before WRHC, only approximately 9% actually transferred credit hours from another college to Harper. The bulk of the report consists of longitudinal data tables. (JMC)

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Office of Planning and Research

William Rainey Harper College

Longitudinal Study of Performance of Students Entering Harper College, 1976-1986

Volume XVII, No. 1
July 25, 1988

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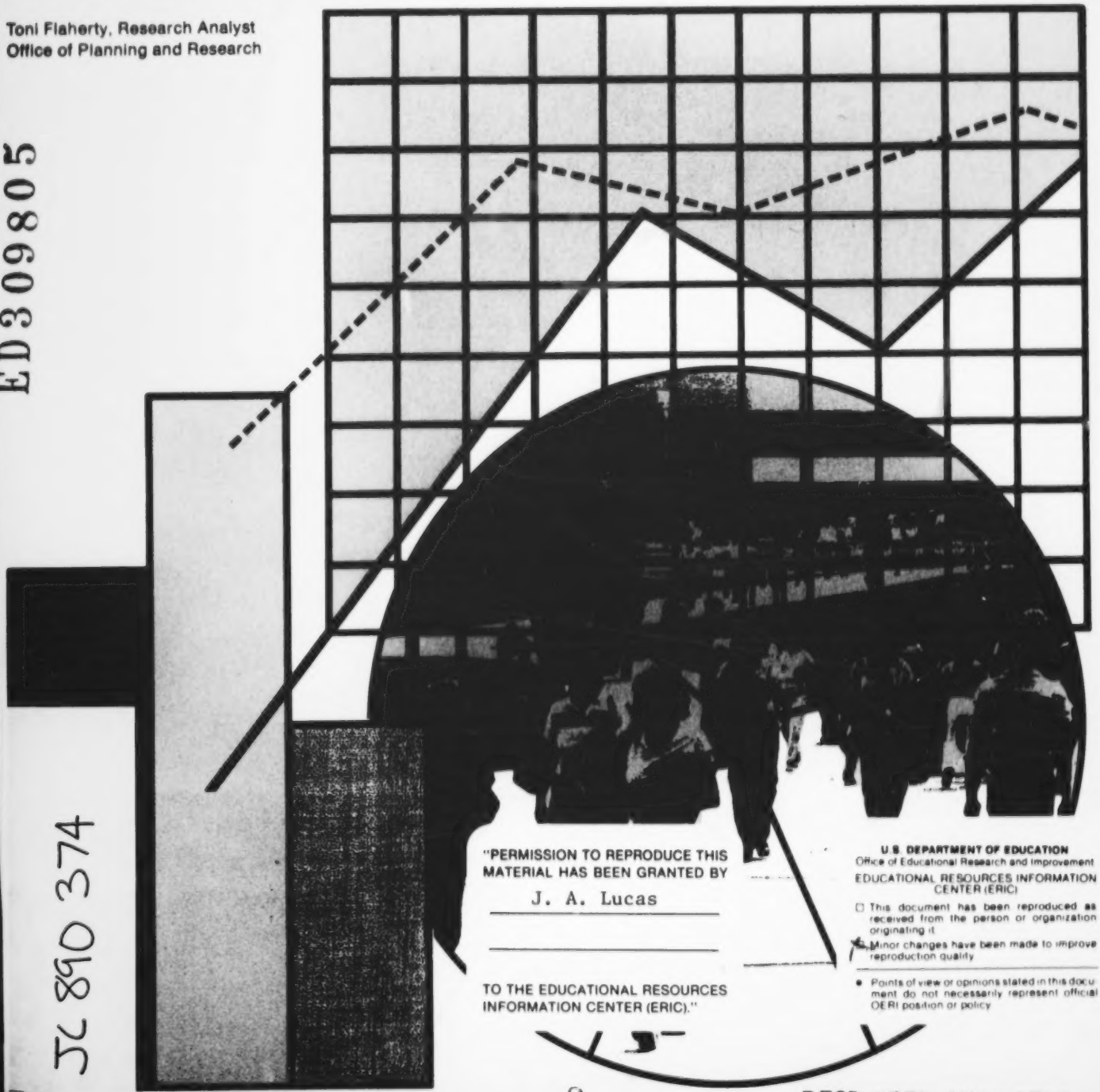
Office of Planning and Research



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ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY FOLLOWED SAMPLES OF SUCCESSIVE CLASSES (1976-1986) OF 200 FULL-TIME AND 200 PART-TIME STUDENTS EACH YEAR IN A LONGITUDINAL MANNER. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY WAS TO PROVIDE SOME BASIC INSTITUTIONAL DATA ABOUT STUDENT PERFORMANCE OVER TIME. DATA WAS OBTAINED ON THEIR PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT AT HARPER THROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE ACADEMIC RECORDS OF EACH OF THE STUDENTS SAMPLED.

OVER THE YEARS THE GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF A STUDENT HAS RISEN AND FALLEN IN DIRECT RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGES IN THE GRADING POLICY. IN YEARS WHEN POLICIES WERE MOST FAVORABLE TO STUDENTS, THE AVERAGE GPA REACHED OVER 2.6 WHILE IN RECENT YEARS, THEY HAVE RETURNED TO THE 2.40 LEVEL. IT WAS ALSO NOTED OLDER STUDENTS ACHIEVE A MUCH HIGHER GPA THAN YOUNGER STUDENTS AND FEMALES ACHIEVE A HIGHER GPA THAN MALES.

PERSISTENCE HAS REMAINED FAIRLY CONSTANT OVER THE YEARS. THE AVERAGE FULL-TIME STUDENT WILL ACCUMULATE 45 HOURS WHILE AT HARPER 4.8 SEMESTERS, AND 35 PERCENT WILL EARN A DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE. THE AVERAGE PART-TIME STUDENT WILL ACCUMULATE 18 HOURS AND ATTEND 3.5 SEMESTERS AT HARPER, AND ABOUT 11 PERCENT OF THESE STUDENTS WILL ACHIEVE A DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE AT HARPER. OLDER STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO STAY ONLY A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME AT HARPER AS MANY HAVE ONLY SHORT-TERM GOALS. FEMALES PERSIST LONGER THAN MALES TO ACHIEVE A DEGREE.

ONLY ABOUT 9 PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS ACTUALLY TRANSFER CREDIT HOURS FROM ANOTHER COLLEGE INTO HARPER EVEN THOUGH 35 TO 40 PERCENT HAVE ATTENDED SOME OTHER COLLEGE PRIOR TO HARPER. SOME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS CONTINUE TO ENROLL IN CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES UP TO TEN YEARS AFTER FIRST BEGINNING AT HARPER. EVENTUALLY ALMOST A FOURTH OF THE FULL-TIME STUDENTS AND 28 PERCENT OF THE PART-TIME STUDENTS ENROLL IN BOTH DEGREE CREDIT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION OFFERINGS AT HARPER. IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASES, STUDENTS ARE FIRST ATTRACTED BY DEGREE CREDIT COURSES AND THEN LATER ENROLL IN CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES. SIMILAR TO THE NATIONAL TRENDS, THE ACT COMPOSITE SCORES OF ENTERING STUDENTS HAVE BEEN DROPPING OVER THE YEARS EVEN THOUGH THEIR HIGH SCHOOL CLASS RANK HAS REMAINED FAIRLY CONSTANT.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Purpose.	1
II.	Populations Surveyed	1
III.	Method Used	1
IV.	Discussion of Results.	1-3
V.	Major Conclusions.	3
VI.	Detailed Results	
	A. Longitudinal Data of Full-Time Degree Credit Students at Harper Beginning in the Fall of 1976-1986.	4-5
	B. Longitudinal Data of Part-Time Degree Credit Students at Harper Beginning in the Fall of 1976-1986.	6-7
	C. Longitudinal Data of Degree Credit Students at Harper Who Began 1976-1986 - By Age.	8
	D. Longitudinal Data of Degree Credit Students at Harper Who Began 1976-1986 - By Sex.	9

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to follow samples of beginning full-time and part-time traditional credit students over a long period of time observing their performance and achievements at Harper College. This type of longitudinal study provides the answer to such questions as: What percentage of all full-time students starting at Harper will ever graduate or accumulate 36 hours of credit or attend four semesters or will take continuing education courses? The same questions can be answered about beginning part-time students. Other questions can also be answered such as their GPA, whether they have transferred into Harper, their age and their standing in their high school graduating class.

Population Surveyed

A random sample of 200 full-time and 200 beginning traditional credit students has been gathered from the population of students entering each fall from 1967 to 1986. This report shows only students who have entered from fall of 1976 to fall of 1986.

Method Used

Transcript data have been gathered on all students in the target samples and the data analyzed. The data was first separated by full time and part time by the year the student started at Harper. A further separation was carried out by age and sex on the GPA analysis.

Discussion of Results

There have been three policy decisions which have affected the grade point average of students over the years. The first occurred in 1972 when students were able to repeat failed courses and replace the old D or F with the new grade rather than just averaging it in. The second policy change came in 1974 and allowed faculty to give N grades rather than Fs to students who simply did not attend. The third policy change occurred in the fall of 1982 when the College dropped the N grade. The following table shows the average grade point of students in these four periods of time.

Student Started as a:	Before Policy Changes 1967-1971	Repeat and Replacement of Grade Policy Instituted 1972-1973	N Grade Instituted 1974-1981	N Grade Dropped 1982-1986
Full-time student	1.95	2.31	2.62	2.38
Part-time student	2.25	2.29	2.74	2.24

This table shows the grade point average was affected drastically by the N grade policy. When it was instituted in 1974, GPA rose dramatically and when

the use of N grades was stopped in the fall of 1982, GPA dropped dramatically. The repeat and grade replacement policy instituted in 1972 affected primarily full-time students who would stay around long enough to repeat courses and replace low grades.

Grade average is also greatly affected by the age of the students when they enter Harper. For example, full-time students entering before they are 21 average 2.48 while full-time students entering after they are 21 or older average 2.86. Part-time students who enter while they are under 21 average 2.05. Those between 21 and 34 average 2.75 and those 35 or older average 3.03. Interestingly, females tend to hold a slightly higher grade point average than males (2.62 GPA for females and 2.36 GPA for males).

Persistence rates have remained fairly constant over the years. About 65 percent of students who start full time one fall return the next fall. Among part-time students since 1976, an average of 39 percent have returned one year later. However, the percent of students who started part time in the fall of 1986 and returned one year later dropped to 23 percent. This is the lowest persistence rate by part-time students since 1968. Almost 90 percent of the students registering full time one fall return the following spring. While an average of 59 percent of the part-time students return the following spring. Many community college students follow stop-out patterns of in and out of college. Thus we find over 13 percent of students who start full time do not return one year later but return at a later time. This percentage for part timers is about eighteen.

Part-time students average about 3.5 semesters attended during their history at Harper while students starting full time will average 4.8 semesters attended. Interestingly, 17 percent of students starting part time attend seven or more semesters at Harper while almost 24 percent of those starting full time will attend Harper seven or more semesters. The term "a two-year college" seems to be a misnomer. Past studies have shown that older students are much more likely to stay only a short time (2 semesters or less) mainly because they had only short-term goals.

Students starting as full-time students will eventually complete about 45 credit hours on the average, while the average student starting part time will complete about 18 credit hours at Harper. Over the years about 35 percent of all persons starting as full-time students will eventually achieve a degree or certificate at Harper. Moreover, over half (52%) will achieve alumni status (48 hours or degree or certificate). Among those starting as part-time students, the percentage graduating dips to 11 percent while 16 percent reached alumni status. There seems to be no trend in these percentages over the years. Age does not seem to have a significant impact on whether or not students persist to graduation; however, older students are more likely to drop early. Also, females are more persistent toward a degree than males.

There seems to be no trend over the years in the percent of students who officially transfer credits from other colleges to Harper. Since 1976 about 9 percent of both the full-time and the part-time students transfer credits to Harper. To put this in perspective, it is known from other studies that 35-40 percent of Harper's students have attended some other college previously. Thus many students who have attended a college prior to enrolling at Harper choose not to transfer their credits in to Harper.

Discussion of Results (continued)

Degree credit students continue to enroll in continuing education offerings long after they first begin at Harper. By the time ten years have passed, one quarter of the full-time degree credit students and 28 percent of the part-time degree credit students have also enrolled in continuing education courses. It seems very evident that degree credit offerings are much more likely to first attract students than are continuing education offerings. For example, after ten years among full-time degree credit students who have also taken continuing education courses, 88 percent took degree credit courses first. Similarly, among part-time degree credit students who also enrolled in continuing education offerings, 85 percent enrolled in degree credit courses first. It should also be noted that the percent of females who enrolled in continuing education courses during the past ten years was twice the percent of males.

The average age of entering full-time students is 19 and for entering part-time students it is 26. The average high school rank for both full-time and part-time students is in the 60th percentile. Consistent with nationwide trends, ACT scores of entering students have been falling over the years. In the early '70s, the mean ACT composite was 19.0 for both full-time and part-time students, but this has fallen to 18.0 percent in the late '70s and to 17.4 percent in the '80s for full-time students and even lower for part-time students - (16.3 in the late '70s and 15.2 in the '80s).

Major Conclusions

Over the years the grade point average of a student has risen and fallen in direct relationship to changes in the grading policy. In years when policies were most favorable to students, the average GPA reached over 2.6 while in recent years, they have returned to the 2.40 level. It was also noted older students achieve a much higher GPA than younger students and females achieve a higher GPA than males.

Persistence has remained fairly constant over the years. The average full-time student will accumulate 45 hours while at Harper 4.8 semesters, and 35 percent will earn a degree or certificate. The average part-time student will accumulate 18 hours and attend 3.5 semesters at Harper, and about 11 percent of these students will achieve a degree or certificate at Harper. Older students are more likely to stay only a short period of time at Harper as many have only short-term goals. Females persist longer than males to achieve a degree.

Only about 9 percent of the students actually transfer credit hours from another college into Harper even though 35 to 40 percent have attended some other college prior to Harper. Some degree credit students continue to enroll in continuing education courses up to ten years after first beginning at Harper. Eventually almost a fourth of the full-time students and 28 percent of the part-time students enroll in both degree credit and continuing education offerings at Harper. In the vast majority of cases, students are first attracted by degree credit courses and then later enroll in continuing education courses. Similar to the national trends, the ACT composite scores of entering students have been dropping over the years even though their high school class rank has remained fairly constant.

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

STUDENTS BEGINNING IN THE FALL OF:

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Sample Size	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Mean GPA	2.64	2.64	2.68	2.63	2.57	2.58	2.23	2.50	2.53	2.31	2.32
Mean Cumulative Hours Attempted	44.64	48.52	48.16	47.09	50.34	46.64	45.11	45.10	48.41	41.99	32.89
Mean Cumulative Hours Earned	43.30	45.51	47.52	45.84	47.99	44.24	41.16	42.83	46.82	38.83	30.55
PCT Registered Following Spring	90.5	93.5	92.5	90.5	92.5	93.5	86.0	89.5	92.0	85.0	83.5
PCT Registered 1 Year Later	59.5	60.5	65.0	65.0	68.0	67.0	70.5	65.0	70.0	62.5	65.5
PCT Not Registered 1 Year Later But Who Returned Another Time	16.0	16.5	13.0	12.0	15.5	9.0	12.5	11.5	12.0	4.0	0
PCT Who Never Return After First Year	24.5	23.0	22.0	23.0	16.5	24.0	17.0	23.5	18.0	33.5	34.5
Average Number of Semesters Registered	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.9	5.3	5.0	4.9	4.7	4.9	3.9	2.8
Percent Registering for:											
One Semester	4.5	4.5	6.0	5.5	4.5	3.5	7.0	5.5	5.0	9.5	12.0
Two Semesters	17.0	16.5	15.0	16.0	9.5	19.0	12.5	17.5	11.5	17.0	22.0
Three Semesters	17.0	13.0	8.5	10.5	11.0	10.0	11.5	8.5	10.0	13.5	40.0
Four Semesters	13.5	15.0	14.0	15.0	19.0	13.5	12.5	14.5	16.5	20.0	26.0
Five Semesters	18.0	16.5	18.5	19.5	12.0	17.5	14.0	17.0	17.5	22.5	0
Six Semesters	11.5	10.5	12.5	12.0	17.0	11.5	14.5	18.5	14.0	12.0	0
Seven or More Semesters	18.5	24.0	25.5	21.5	27.0	25.0	28.0	18.5	25.5	5.5	0

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

STUDENTS BEGINNING IN THE FALL OF:

Hours Earned and Degree Status	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Under 24 Hours	20.0	19.0	14.0	24.5	13.5	23.0	25.5	22.0	17.5	27.5	28.0
24-35 Hrs./No Degree	25.0	21.0	19.5	13.0	19.0	18.5	17.5	22.5	17.0	18.0	27.5
36-47 Hrs./No Degree	8.5	6.0	11.5	11.0	8.0	9.0	11.5	6.0	9.0	14.0	33.0
48 Hours Or More/ No Degree	16.0	13.5	16.5	13.0	19.5	20.5	18.0	17.0	24.0	19.0	9.0
48 Hours Or More/ With Degree	26.5	38.0	36.0	37.0	34.0	27.5	25.5	29.5	31.0	20.0	0
Less Than 48 Hours With Degree	.5	1.5	1.5	.5	3.0	.5	.5	1.5	0	.5	1.5
Certificate Only	3.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.0
PCT Transferring Into Harper Officially	8.5	9.0	7.0	8.5	12.5	8.5	10.5	7.5	4.5	11.0	9.0
PCT Taking Continuing Education Courses - Total	24.5	21.0	21.0	18.5	15.0	15.0	9.0	10.0	9.0	9.0	2.5
PCT Taking Degree Credit Courses First	21.5	18.0	18.5	17.0	14.0	12.0	9.0	8.5	8.0	4.0	1.5
PCT Taking Continuing Education Courses First	1.5	1.5	0	.5	.5	2.0	0	.5	0	3.5	0
PCT Taking Them Simultaneously	1.5	1.5	4.5	1.0	.5	1.0	0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0
Mean Age	18.7	18.7	18.1	18.4	18.7	18.4	18.4	18.5	18.1	18.6	18.8
Sample Size Age	194	192	190	194	198	197	198	197	200	200	200
Mean High School Rank	63.1	63.8	63.7	63.0	64.9	59.4	58.2	60.9	58.6	59.2	57.5
Sample Size Rank	167	169	165	156	168	164	179	177	161	169	159
Mean ACT Composite	18.9	18.2	18.2	17.4	18.9	17.3	16.5	17.9	17.8	16.1	17.9
Sample Size - ACT	55	110	46	43	88	125	111	75	80	78	63

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

STUDENTS BEGINNING IN THE FALL OF:

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Sample Size	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Mean GPA	2.65	2.98	2.85	2.71	2.63	2.68	2.29	2.47	2.53	1.83	2.10
Mean Cumulative Hours Attempted	23.95	23.80	21.67	19.35	20.01	20.31	16.50	17.06	18.28	19.30	7.36
Mean Cumulative Hours Earned	21.06	21.10	20.68	18.43	18.53	18.80	14.56	15.64	16.86	16.17	6.09
PCT Registered Following Spring	70.5	57.5	83.5	80.5	82.5	82.5	57.5	47.5	58.0	66.0	45.0
PCT Registered One Year Later	39.0	36.5	43.5	41.5	37.5	44.5	40.0	38.0	33.5	40.0	22.5
PCT Not Registered One Year Later - But Who Returned Another Time	15.5	17.0	19.0	21.0	18.5	13.0	12.5	13.0	17.5	8.5	0
PCT Who Never Return After First Year	45.5	46.5	37.5	37.5	44.0	42.5	47.5	49.0	49.0	51.5	77.5
Average Number of Semesters Registered	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.2	3.2	3.1	2.9	1.7
Percent Registering For:											
One Semester	21.0	30.5	21.5	20.5	25.0	23.5	30.5	36.0	30.0	27.5	52.0
Two Semesters	28.0	19.5	19.0	21.0	18.5	20.5	26.0	21.0	22.5	25.5	28.0
Three Semesters	11.0	10.0	16.0	16.5	13.0	12.0	10.0	8.0	13.0	11.0	16.0
Four Semesters	8.5	9.0	10.0	11.0	9.5	10.5	8.0	10.5	12.5	12.0	4.0
Five Semesters	5.0	3.5	7.5	5.0	8.5	11.5	6.5	6.5	6.0	16.5	0
Six Semesters	8.0	3.0	9.0	7.0	8.5	5.5	6.5	4.5	7.0	6.0	0
Seven or More Semesters	18.5	24.5	17.0	19.0	19.0	16.5	12.5	13.5	9.0	1.5	0

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

STUDENTS BEGINNING IN THE FALL OF:

Hours Earned and Degree Status	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Under 12 Hours	49.5	54.0	47.0	54.0	49.5	53.5	62.5	64.5	58.0	51.0	83.5
12-23 Hours	20.0	17.5	22.5	18.0	20.5	19.0	15.5	13.0	16.5	23.0	14.0
24-35 Hours/No Degree	8.8	4.5	6.5	9.0	9.0	8.0	6.0	4.0	8.5	11.0	2.0
36-47 Hours/No Degree	3.0	4.5	6.5	4.0	5.0	4.5	2.5	4.0	6.0	6.0	.5
48 Hours or More/No Degree	7.5	5.5	6.0	1.5	5.5	6.5	3.5	5.0	4.5	3.0	0
48 Hours or More/ With Degree	8.5	10.5	6.5	9.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	3.5	3.0	0
Less than 48 Hours/ With Degree	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	0	.5	4.5	.5	1.5	0
Certificate Only	1.0	1.5	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.5	0	2.5	1.5	0
PCT Transferring Into Harper Officially	9.5	11.0	7.0	11.5	8.5	10.0	11.0	9.5	3.0	11.0	9.0
PCT Taking C.E.Courses - Total	27.5	38.0	28.5	33.0	23.0	29.5	21.0	23.5	8.5	9.5	8.5
PCT Taking Degree Credit First	23.5	21.5	24.5	24.5	17.5	16.5	18.0	11.5	6.0	8.0	4.0
PCT Taking C.E.Courses First	1.5	4.0	1.0	2.5	2.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	0	0	.5
PCT Taking Them Simultaneously	2.5	12.5	3.0	6.0	3.5	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.5	1.5	4.0
Mean Age	25.6	26.9	25.6	25.7	25.9	24.8	25.4	26.6	24.3	22.8	26.5
Sample Size Age	183	189	183	192	194	184	197	192	199	199	200
Mean High School Rank	62.5	66.3	65.2	63.2	60.6	63.4	62.2	62.9	53.0	50.3	60.9
Sample Size Rank	171	183	155	144	148	164	171	134	140	154	142
Mean ACT Composite	15.4	17.3	16.3	16.2	14.5	15.8	15.0	16.4	15.5	14.5	14.6
Sample Size - ACT	12	29	14	9	21	39	27	19	24	33	13

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER WHO BEGAN 1976-1986 - BY AGE

	Full-Time Students			Part-Time Students			
	Under 21 Years of Age	21 Years of Age and Older	Age Unknown	Under 21 Yrs. of Age	21-34 Yrs. Old	35 Years of Age and Older	Age Unknown
Number	2026	133	41	949	830	333	88
PCT of Age Group	92.1	6.0	1.9	43.1	37.7	15.2	4.0
GPA	2.48	2.86	2.64	2.05	2.75	3.03	2.64
Cumulation at Harper	Percents						
Under 12 hours	[[20.8	[[27.9	[[14.6	42.4	65.8	71.5	72.7
12-23 hours	[	[	[	22.2	16.9	11.7	10.2
24-35 hours	20.0	18.8	29.3	10.8	4.8	3.3	3.4
36-47 hours	12.0	9.0	4.9	7.7	1.5	3.0	—
48 or more hours - No Degree	17.1	13.5	17.1	7.2	2.3	2.4	3.4
48 or more hours - With Degree	28.2	17.3	34.1	8.3	4.0	3.0	4.6
Less than 48 hours - With Degree	.8	4.5	0	.6	1.9	3.0	1.1
Certificate Only	1.1	9.0	0	.8	3.0	2.1	4.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0	100.0

Longitudinal Data of Degree Credit Students at Harper
Who Began 1976-1986 - By Sex

	Full-Time Students			Part-Time Students		
	Male	Female	Unknown	Male	Female	Unknown
Number	1058	1138	4	976	1220	4
PCT of Group	48.1	51.7	.2	44.4	55.4	.2
GPA	2.38	2.62	2.94	2.39	2.61	2.66
Cumulation at Harper			Percents			
Under 12 Hours	[[23.5	[[18.9	[[25.0	58.7	55.4	75.0
12-23 Hours	[	[	[	17.3	18.8	25.0
24-35 Hours	19.5	20.7	25.0	7.2	6.9	0
36-47 Hours	12.5	10.9	0	4.5	3.8	0
48 or More Hours - No Degree	18.4	15.8	0	5.2	3.8	0
48 or More Hours - With Degree	23.3	31.5	50.0	4.1	7.0	0
Less than 48 Hours - With Degree	1.4	.7	0	.7	2.4	0
Certificate Only	1.4	1.7	0	2.3	2.0	0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
PCT Taking Continuing Education Courses	7.9	19.8	0	15.2	28.5	0

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